
**Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness
Committee**

HB 1157

Brief Description: Reviewing the delivery of emergency information to the general public during an ongoing emergency.

Sponsors: Representatives Anderson and Morris.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Adjutant General of the Washington Military Department to establish a workgroup to study how to enhance the delivery of emergency information to the general public in the event of an ongoing emergency.

Hearing Date: 1/21/09

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841)

Background:

The Emergency Management Division (EMD) of the Washington Military Department administers emergency management and disaster relief programs. The EMD is also responsible for carrying out all emergency management functions to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters resulting from natural and technological hazards. The Director of the Military Department (Director), appointed by the Governor, is required to develop a comprehensive emergency management plan including an analysis of any natural, technological, or human-caused hazards that could affect the state.

The Washington State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (Plan) is a comprehensive Plan for statewide mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery activities. The mission of the Plan is to help minimize the impact of emergencies and disasters on the people, property, environment, and economy of Washington. The Plan takes into consideration the emergencies and disasters likely to occur and describes: the functions and activities necessary to implement

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emergency management; responsibilities in relation to federal disaster assistance programs; and the use of government, private sector, and volunteer resources.

Local jurisdictions must establish comprehensive local emergency management plans, and submit their plans to the Director for recommendations. Local jurisdictions may also establish and operate joint local emergency management organizations.

Summary of Bill:

The Adjutant General of the Washington Military Department must convene a 12-member workgroup to study how to enhance the delivery of emergency information to the general public in the event of an ongoing emergency.

The workgroup consists of members representing the following entities: the Washington State Association of Broadcasters, the Emergency Alert System, the National Weather Service, the Emergency Management Division of the Washington Military Department, a local emergency management organization, the 911 Advisory Committee, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the field of higher education, the Department of Transportation, and a nonprofit, public policy organization.

The study must include the following:

- how to create a comprehensive approach to delivering updated information to the public in the event of an ongoing emergency;
- how to use existing alert systems to coordinate delivery of updated information;
- how to use the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio System to coordinate the delivery of updated information;
- how to create redundancies in the system to ensure that updated information in the event of an ongoing emergency will be available;
- how to improve coordination between the Emergency Alert System, the NOAA Weather Radio, local broadcast stations, and other existing systems to ensure a seamless transfer of information to the public;
- how to take advantage of modes of communication beyond radio and television;
- how to integrate the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction notification systems in the emergency notification systems;
- how to implement the statewide emergency notification system to ensure its immediate availability to 911 public safety answering points for local notifications;
- how to ensure that utilization of the system includes specific information delivery to impacted elected officials; and
- what types of information the public needs the most in the aftermath of an emergency.

The Adjutant General must submit a report on the workgroup's recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature by December 1, 2009.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 14, 2009.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.